

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Thunder Ridge Communication Site

**Project Manager:** Charlie Majors TEP-CSB-2

**Location:** Bonneville County, Idaho

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to construct a new communication facility atop Iona Butte in Bonneville County, Idaho. The new facility would replace equipment that is currently housed in a State of Idaho communication facility on the same butte.

BPA's new facility would include a new 21 x 44 foot communication building, 120 foot tall radio tower with 10 antennas, and a 2,000 gallon propane tank for backup power. BPA would purchase an undeveloped 1.27-acre parcel adjacent to the existing facilities. An area roughly 125 x 72 feet would be fenced and graveled to contain the communication facilities. The site is gently sloping and limited grading would be necessary. No soils would need to be disposed of off-site. The base of the tower would be approximately 30 by 30 foot concrete slab, at a depth of 4 feet. Two concrete slabs (3 by 4 feet and 18-24 inches deep) would be poured at either end of the propane tank for footings. Electrical power and fiber optic cables would be run from the State of Idaho facility to BPA's new site in a single trench. Separate fiber optic and electrical vaults would be constructed at each end. An existing access road would be extended 25 feet to the site and a limited amount of road grading and graveling (approximately 100 yards) would be needed on the existing road.

**Findings:** In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, July 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Claire McClory  
Claire McClory  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason  
Stacy L. Mason  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 8, 2015

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

## Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

**Proposed Action:**                      **Thunder Ridge Communication Site**

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### Project Site Description

The proposed project is atop Iona Butte in Bonneville County, Idaho. The project area is immediately surrounded by native vegetation and agriculture. The eastern half of the parcel is covered in large boulders. The remainder is composed of sage brush and prickly-pear cactus. The site is adjacent to several other communication facilities.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Idaho SHPO concurrence on no adverse effect on historic properties 5/15/2015. Shoshone-Bannock Tribe requested to be notified should cultural material/human remains be unearthed during ground disturbance.		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Minimal soil disturbance.		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species present. One acre of shrubs removed or disturbed.		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species present. One acre low quality habitat typical of the area would be disturbed.		
5. <b>Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish</b> (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> None present.		

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: None present.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: None present.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**

Explanation: Land use would change from undeveloped parcel to developed communication site adjacent to other similar facilities.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: New communication facilities would include a 120-foot tall tower. Would be visually consistent with adjacent communication site facilities.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Small amount of dust and vehicle emissions during construction.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Temporary construction noise during daylight hours.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: No impact.

### Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

- Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation, if necessary:

- Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation, if necessary:

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: As part of this project BPA will purchase the Thunder Ridge property in fee from a private landowner.

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Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts on any environmentally sensitive resources.

Signed: /s/ Claire McClory  
Claire McClory KEC-4

Date: September 8, 2015